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SOME WORK IN DEBATES

When the class is ready for formal argument, after some preliminary work in argumentation and informal debate, we begin on debates in earnest. Some half-dozen live, present-day subjects are given out and each student hands in a first and second choice. These preferences are followed out as far as possible and the class divided into teams of six, three on each side of the question. After a week of general reading, note-taking, and discussion on *both* sides of the question, sides are assigned. The class period during all this is used for conference between teacher and pupil and between colleagues. Good references are brought into class and listed on the blackboard, and the interest runs higher and higher as the material grows and the possibilities of the subject begin to appear. This year our subjects were on the Panama Canal, the parcel post, suffrage, and the six-year term for President.

At the end of three weeks of solid work of gathering material, dividing points among colleagues, etc., outlines of the *whole* debate are prepared for the teacher's inspection. This year I was fortunate in having in my class six boys who had won big interscholastic debates; so instead of pitting them against young, totally inexperienced debaters, I made them captains over some of the several squads who were at work on their subjects, and the way these captains worked with and for their charges more than vindicated the experiment.

By the fifth week all is in readiness. We dress up the classroom to resemble a clubroom with tables for the chairman (a member of the class) and long tables on either side for the affirmative and the negative. Outside judges are asked in, the teacher sinks into the background, a good many visitors appear, and the debate progresses with due formality. Each of the six speakers has a five-minute speech with one minute extra allowed for rebuttal, the first speaker on the affirmative having three minutes for his rebuttal and to close the debate.

This, it will be readily seen, consumes all of a forty-minute period, allowing only a little time for the sergeant-at-arms appointed by the chair to collect the decisions of the judges. It takes four days of a week to run off all the debates, but the interest of the students and their pride in their success more than repay the teacher for her many hours of drilling and rehearsing. And be it said to the credit of those concerned that this year, out of fifty Juniors scheduled to appear, *not one* was absent on the day appointed for his debate. Not one of them failed, and many obtained results which they (and perhaps their classmates and teachers) had deemed impossible. To show to what an extent

the interest in the "Junior debates" pervades the entire school, it might be added that at the closing debate of the series recently given, just 90 people were crowded into an average classroom and there was not the slightest trace of disorder.

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To the Editor of the "English Journal":

I have just finished reading Professor Alden's article in the current number of the *English Journal* entitled, "The College Curriculum in Literature." "What teacher of English," he says, "if himself really educated, has not envied, now and then, his colleagues engaged in these other fields, because they have always to deal with a body of knowledge of a substantial and continuous character, such as offers this wholesome resistance to the student's mind?"

Now, I have always thanked God that I was just one of those same impossible teachers! I have never during seven years of college and four of normal-school teaching for one single moment envied my colleagues; I have, on the other hand, always felt sorry for them. Of course I must assume that I am "educated," but I take courage since Professor Alden by the nature of his question assumes as much for himself and really does not consider himself at all "a second-rate sensitive professor."

But, O dear! there is so much in this article to make one discouraged with his education! Think of those endless "reading courses" we used to take in Chicago—how little of the "social and anthropological aspects of particular ages and groups" we got, and how much of McClintock and Miss Reynolds and Tolman and Moody we got instead! Then to think that some of us were led to search for the "critical and philosophical basis" of literature by the love of literature itself—we had so much feeling in those dark days and so little "human intelligence"!

Then since reading this article I remember with humiliation the times I have felt "guilty or triumphant." I remember especially the time that the late Mr. Moody read Clough's "Ite Domum Saturae venit Hesperus," and I felt triumphant and I glowed with the triumph—glowed for fourteen years with it—glowed up to this very evening! But now the glow has become a blush, for I suspect I got a credit in "Victorian Literature" partly on the strength of that glow. How dishonest we were in those days!

Still, there is another thing that diminishes my self-respect and makes me feel very sad. It seems that the average college student can really